

Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 126
Final Meeting Minutes, September 9, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:01 PM. Attending: Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB; chair), David Honn (DH), Ron Regan (RR), Anita Rogers (AR), and David Shoemaker (DS; note-taker). Mike Gowing attending (Selectmen Representative)

7:01pm **Citizen's Questions/Comments**

Scott Kutil, 43 Windsor: Discussion of sponsoring of Zoning changes and notions of how one could proceed to bring it to readiness for a Town Meeting. DH to work with SK to put in a form that is correct for a Warrant Article, and to proceed with contacts with the Town government offices.

In addition to Zoning, Updating and refining, cleaning up and clarifying of bylaws esp. with respect to signage is a goal for a Town Meeting addressing HDC issues; much of the background work was done and recorded in previous HDC notes and needs to be unearthed and assembled.

KAB proposes August 26 notes approved unanimously

7:16 **Review of current issues**

Public meeting for 62 Windsor; AR confirms that the arrangements are in place.

16-18 School Street Window violation: HDC wishes to propose less expensive windows that are acceptable to the HDC, and to discuss the timetable. AR to contact via email.

24 River St: KAB to follow up

Satellite dish, 3 years ago asked to remove; KAB to ask Frank to follow up
102 Main St

554 Mass Ave Pitta – unapproved HVAC piping installation different from approval

69-71 School St – window violation

tonight: 540 Mass Ave, continued public hearing

82 River for solar panels and visible Satellite dish (a violation)

25-27 School Street will probably be a CNA

7:20

#1425, 62 Windsor Ave: J.D. Heard Presents drawings from architects. Started a year ago. Describes evolution of the use, and form, of the house. Wishes to have a single well-defined entrance (suppressing an older window), and provide attic office with adequate light. Also replicating front porch details on right façade. Note that the porch has a hip roof in the present design (previous proposal was flat).

KAB: Appreciate the thought going into the process. No problem with the porch, door. However, the triple window is not typical of the genre. Would prefer a different approach to additional light.

AR: Agree that the specific window choice not optimal. Skylights ok if on rear (not visible). No other similar windows on the house, and panes are square. Make it say 6/1 in the center, and simple one-light windows left-right. AR sketches. Neither 15-lite French door nor recessed lighting at the porch are typical of the period, would prefer surface mount lighting. Wood steps to wood porch good. Cut sheet for the Attic Window is for a simulated divided light, and it will really look very different from the existing windows. If new and old windows are to look similar to each other you would have to install a storm over the new SDL windows or remove the storm window elsewhere. The existing storm windows define the overall window appearance of the façade.

DH: could move the storms inside for the older single panes, and use simulated lights for the new windows.

DS: consider changes to break up the symmetry of the surface, and don't love the window as drawn, but overall supportive.

RR: Elliptical window could be ok, but see that the current window is just right. Supportive of the overall project.

KAB: could leave the attic window as is and update later and pursue the remainder of the project? Lighting could also be finalized on a follow-up HDC appointment.

KAB goes over next steps, Public Hearing on the 23rd.

8:05

#1422, continuation of Public Hearing: new homes at 540 Mass Ave.

RR recuses himself.

Citizens and presenters circulate the sign-in sheet.

Revised Plans offered to the HDC.

- another window to dormer

- extending dormer
- pushing doors back
- adding lights
- removing railings and posts on porch
- addressing side and brackets on the porch

Four versions to present. Also shows Hardy Planck and bracket options. Gutter and downspout plan described. Result is garage doors are intended to be minimized in aesthetic impact. Looked at window types – mitered vs. butt joint casings. Four lantern-style lights suggested.

KAB: notes that we closed public comment at the last meeting; but invites brief comments from the public.

SK, 43 Windsor: Away on vacation for last meeting; appreciate chance to speak. Has been following with interest. HDC charter requires new construction to be harmonious, and to avoid incongruous element. SK believes garages on front are incongruous; only 3 buildings in West Acton have garages, and only one is to be considered as an example, a Sears Roebuck special. Quoting again from the charger, 'Commission strongly encourages parking behind structures'. Distance, vegetation, and fences are not mitigating factors in HDC bylaws (except for use of non-traditional materials). Requests that the commission not approve the application.

KAB: Now HDC to discuss among themselves. KAB comments:

Precedents are important. These buildings are in fact distant, and that distance minimizes the impact. Also changes the context, and can make it more appropriate to have something non-house-like there than e.g., a colonial replica.

DH: 1) can you put garage doors on the front of an HDC-district house and be compatible; and 2) why no garages? Because they were made before the car culture was developed. The HDC has pushed to minimize the impact of those doors. The context of these buildings is not Windsor Ave etc., but really the buildings near it. Reluctantly says it fits in its context, but only because the context is so different from much of the HDC districts.

AR: much like KAB, these buildings become the outbuildings of the Mass Ave buildings. A beautifully crafted Victorian would have also been odd. Not as integral to the district as most other buildings.

KAB: less is more

DS: Echoes. Make it disappear. We would like to remove all the buildings and start over, but not an option.

KAB: right of way provides constraints. How does this differ from other decisions from the HDC?

AR: The existing access road makes a significant difference. Also, the Mass Ave houses in front continue to have a whole yard, a complete package, in contrast to the case of 62 Windsor where the existing yard suffered from the proposed design.

DH: This is a private street, unlike Windsor. Agrees with simple, disappearing design objectives if this is to work.

KAB: the exaggerated overhang helps to make it more about other things than the garage doors, helping to contribute to the anonymity of the design. It is a lot about context, positioning and the street scape; simpler is better, and distracting less from the Mass Ave street scape.

AR: believes that the windows can be brought closer to the edges of the dormers. Does not care for #4. Need to search for consistency of the realization. 2/1 windows better, and more windows the better. Prefers version 1.

DH: prefers #1. Does not think you need a return visible on the shed.

DS: #1.

KAB: #1. feels more like a carriage house to have the 3 windows

DH: Wants the corner boards 1x10 on the shed, and elsewhere on the house.

Doors: DH and AR do not feel that the sidelights are compatible with the doors, and there is nothing gained; KAB agrees. AR sketches a panel door and sidelight with glass above and panel below that matches at the midpoint with the door. DS likes AR sketch, one lite.

Hardware and lighting – KAB: good hardware choices. Lighting: prefer simpler the 'shower head' style. DH, AR, and DS prefer the simple lantern style lamp.

Garage doors: KAB: the style is approved on River street but in a different context. Have requested black. DH: While the color is not in our jurisdiction, several shades of Grey. AR: white also possible, but all the same. DS asks about the angled brace on the garage doors; the HDC prefers the 2-top 4-bottom V-H doors.

Materials: KAB: HDC has Not approved fiber-cement clapboards for complete facades. Hardy plank does not age in an attractive way. Steps and stairs can be acceptable, but does not want to see it as the dominant

surface. DH agrees that it is not desirable. AR and DS agree that we require cedar siding. Corner boards: KAB prefers wood. AR and DH think that a good composite AZEK can be acceptable, if painted.

Windows: KAB: prefer wood windows. AR: Windsor non-wood windows can be good. Require a simulated divided light, but composite sill would be acceptable. Steps for the porch, deck can be composite. Railings to be wood.

AR and DH prefer the eave over the door to be even lower than drawn. Arched bracket is preferred. Dimension from top of door to top of soffit: Currently 18", prefer 14".

AR: Makes a motion: that we approve the Project at Flannery Way.

Buildings to be identical to each other and similar to version #1.

The commission finds that this design is acceptable due to a number of conditions: distance from street; desire for the building to recede, so that the buildings that face Mass Ave have visual prominence; that the desired aesthetic be one of simplicity. Flannery way and its context already exist. The part of the building visible from the public way should be minimal. The context is different from other

Version #1 with the following refinements:

- 2 groups of 2/1 windows (check)
- water table as drawn
- 1x10 corner board at each corner
- Wood clapboard on front
- Wood stair railing and balusters, composite deck and treads
- Wood windows composite sill; simulated divided lite 2/1 (like River St. houses) integral casing 5/4 x 4
- Brackets 36 by 36 on either side, 4 brackets total
- Garage door is 921 plain, 6 lites
- Front door to be Thermatru smoothstar 4 lite 2 panel with single lite sidelight, panel below.
- Exterior light fixtures to be per attached paperwork, plain square lantern, \$42.60
- Eave will be 4" lower than shown (estimate 14" from top of 7' garage door)
- No rake return (per right elevation drawing)
- Architectural roof shingles similar to River St

Recommend: that the houses be painted shades of grey, to agree with the will of the HDC to minimize the visual impact. White ok. Monochromatic scheme preferred in any case.

Seconded by DS.

Unanimous vote to approve.

9:42 #1427 14 Newtown Road Amendment; DS recuses himself

10:00 #1424 82 River Street: DH and KAB are recused. PL joins, DS rejoins.
Discussion of Solar Cells on Roof. PL describes visit to the house and a discussion of precedents and the responsibility of the HDC to preserve the sense of the community. Pam had discussions about the possibility of putting it elsewhere.

RR: could put it on the ground, but PL notes that there is minimal yard space.

AR: describes the limitations of being in the Historic district. Says we have not approved this to date.

PL: Good to discuss with the installer to see if there is another place where the panels could be installed which would be acceptable to the HDC.

Suggestions were made for alternative approaches.

PL: separate issue: we can see a satellite dish. Applicant says the owners can and will remove it. Suggestions that the installer come to an HDC meeting to discuss options with or without an application

PL: Moves to deny application #1424 for the installation of solar panels as 82 River St.

Finding: The south-facing roof slope is directly visible from the public way. PL Seconds.

Unanimous vote to deny the application.

10:20 Move to adjourn; seconded; meeting ended.

Respectfully submitted,

David Shoemaker

